1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



582 between the two affinal groups ensure not only the stability of the
596 marriage, but also contribute to the solidarity of each of the two *okkas* connected by the marriage, and especially of the groom's *okka*.

## XII

587 A woman is socially identified with her sisters, and a person's
582 mother's sisters are identified with his mother. As sororatic unions
596 are preferred among Coorgs, a mother's younger sister steps into the mother's shoes in the event of the mother's death before her sister's marriage. It is regarded as natural for the step-mother to hate her step-children, and a widower marries his dead wife's younger sister because he believes that the latter is more likely than anybody else to treat her step-children well.

A man's mother's sisters' children are regarded as his brothers and sisters. He may not marry his mother's sister's daughter: such a union would be incestuous. The importance of the mother's sisters is stressed in their identification with the mother and in identifying their children with one's brothers and sisters.

582 It has been remarked earlier that the marriage of a girl causes a
596 change in the established relations of the members of her natal as well as conjugal *okka*. The former *okka* loses a member, whereas the latter gains one. The members of one group have to adjust themselves to the loss of a member who was with them for seventeen or eighteen or more years, and whom they all love deeply, whereas the other group have to admit a grown stranger into their *okka*. This is the inevitable result of the rule of patrilocal residence. The marriage of a daughter means her exile from her natal home. But cross-cousin marriage ensures that the daughter in question goes into an *okka* with which strong bonds of solidarity already exist. Further, the daughter's daughters return to their mother's natal *okka* on their (former's) marriage, while the daughter's sons provide a home for their mother's brother's daughters. In other words, marriage with a cross-cousin minimizes the disturbances resulting from marriage.

604 The maternal uncle is an important relative: he is the mother's
[582] brother, and represents the mother's natal *okka*. Perhaps he himself has married his sister's husband's sister—cross-cousin marriage is symmetrical among Coorgs. He is also likely to be father-in-law to his sister's children. But he belongs to a different *okka* from his

1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5



sister's son. His importance is stressed in ritual and in the exchange of gifts.

A man whose maternal uncle is alive may not eat curry made of bitter oranges or green plantains. A proverb tells us that a diver for pearls must make certain that his maternal uncle is holding the rope above. Diving for pearls is a notoriously hazardous occupation and the life of the diver is in the hands of the man who is holding the rope above. It requires the greatest vigilance on the latter's part. It is significant that the maternal uncle should be chosen for this task. It is a tribute to the strength of bond between a man and his mother's brother.

The maternal uncle, paternal aunt, and the married sister are all required to bring gifts, provisions, and sheets of cloth called *kēṭāmé* at the marriage of a man. An informant told me that he remembered his mother carrying twenty head-loads of *kēṭāmé* gifts to her younger brother's wedding.

A party bringing *kēṭāmé* gifts is honoured with 'plantain honour' (*bāḷé birudu*): the leader of the party is asked to cut with his Coorg sword a row of three stout plantain stems fixed to the ground. A man who cuts through a stem at one stroke is a skilled swordsman: the blow must fall at an acute angle and must be delivered with firmness and strength.

The bringers of *kēṭāmé* gifts are given in return token gifts of cooked pork and sweet dishes. The host's band accompanies them a little distance when they leave.

Those relatives who brought *kēṭāmé* at wedding bring gifts of provisions and cloths called *aḍatalé* at death. They come accompanied by their band, and they are again given in return token gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes.

Just before the corpse is buried or cremated certain important relatives perform a rite of segregation called *Koḍa kukkuva*, the purpose of which is to break the bond between the dead person and his (or her) relatives. The relatives who have to take part in this rite are the dead person's spouse, eldest son, and 'cross-nephew' (i.e. a man's sister's son, or a woman's brother's son). The surviving spouse takes a mud pot, the son a tender coconut, and the 'cross-nephew' a bell-metal vessel with a spout at the side (*kiṇḍi*).

The three relatives march to a pond or well in the burial-ground after the bier has been deposited near the funeral pit or pyre. They have a dip in the pond, after which the family friend or his